Volume 8, Issue 7   Atari Online News, Etc.   February 17, 2006

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~ New Tera Desktop Out!  ~ People Are Talking!    ~ New HDDriver Manual!
~ New AtarICQ Update!    ~ No MSN Name Change!    ~ Mac Virus Debuts!
~ Vista Out By Holidays? ~ Going Online For Fun!  ~ New MacBook Pro!
~                        ~ No MSN Name Change!    ~

           -* Bill Graham's Rock Archives! *-
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       -* New Cyber Stalking Law: What Is Annoying?  *-




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->From the Editor's Keyboard               "Saying it like it is!"
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""




What a week it was!  Remember that Joe, in his column last week, mentioned
that we were due for a snowstorm over the weekend.  Well, it hit the both of
us with a wintry vengeance.  If I recall, Joe's area of New England got
about two feet of snow, and we got over a foot in my neck of the woods.  We
had to go out twice to keep up with the ferocity of snowfall.  There were
some areas around here that was getting 2-3 inches an hour!  Fortunately,
it was so dry that the snow was light and powdery.  It was easy to move, and
didn't take too long to clean up.  And now, a few days later, it's almost
gone.  We've had temperatures around 50 degrees, so this stuff has been
melting quickly.  Just in time for some arctic cold this weekend!  So,
Spring is just around the corner, right?

Until next time...




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             AtarICQ 0.167 Is Released (Important Update!)


Hi all,

Have you been experiencing problems with ICQ last few days? Then keep
on reading!

Recently there have been some serious problems with a couple of ICQ
clients, aICQ being one of them. The problem has been that incoming
messages have not been received properly. It would have seemed like all
your friends were silent all the time. Thanks to some fast research by
Dan, there is now an update which should take care of this issue. If
you use AtarICQ, make sure to grab this update ASAP!

Other noticeable changes in the new release:

   * Cleaned up the keyboard evaluation code

   * Masked out all messages about oncoming contacts during the first
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10s. (Some ppl reported server was lagging this data a bit, hence this delay was added in order to avoid unnecessary console text)

    * Some ICQ (spam) bots are trying to trick ppl to add them to contact list by sending out signal that "user is online". That would indicate that we have already added them to your contact list, something that is not necessarily true. Since aICQ now supports the server side list directly, some of these attempts will now be detected and blocked.

    * If contact list was empty, the option to "hide separators" would crash aICQ. Solved by temporarily cancelling the hiding, until contacts are added.

    * In dialog for adding more contacts, the number of allowed chars for UIN/ screenname has been increased from 10 to 16.

    * In MagiC, setting both SELECTEABLE and TOUCHEXIT for an object will make form_button() wait for the mouse button to be released. This is now worked around, allowing the setting of auto-away time in preferences to work smoother under MagiC.

Get the new AtarICQ release here:

http://www.ataricq.org

Regards,

/Joakim

http://www.ataricq.org
http://xaaes.atariforge.net
http://topp.atari-users.net

                    HDDRIVER News: English Manual

Hello,

As the Atari Workshop website has vanished and I have not been able to reach Atari Workshop by email I have decided to offer the English version of HDDRIVER *including the English manual* myself.

I am currently revising and updating the English manual. Users ordering HDDRIVER 8.1 can now choose between the German, English and French manual. The French manual only covers HDDRIVER 7, though.

For registered users of HDDRIVER 8.1 the current English manual is also available separately. Please refer to

http://www.seimet.de/hddriverprices_english.html for details.

Remember that you can pay with PayPal, which ensures that HDDRIVER can also be ordered conveniently from countries outside the EU without having to pay high fees for bank transfers or sending the money in cash.

Best regards,   Uwe

TeraDesk 3.80 Is Available

Hello;

Version 3.80 of Tera Desktop (TeraDesk) open-source desktop is available
at:

        http://solair.eunet.yu/~vdjole/teradesk.htm

TeraDesk is currently the only open-source desktop available for 16-bit and
32-bit Atari computers. Developer's goal is to maintain TeraDesk as a
small, simple, fast and reliable desktop, which can run on any
TOS-compatible Atari computer, clone or emulator and which can be be
functional and competitive in the modern multitasking environments and all
flavours and versions of TOS-compatible operating system(s), while keeping,
as much as reasonable, familiarity with the original TOS desktop.

Main new features in this release are related to a capability to pass names
of network objects, such as web pages and ftp sites, via the AV and
drag&drop protocols, and to assign such names as 'document types' to
applications. Supported name prefixes are currently http:, ftp: and
mailto:; this enables e.g. MyMail to work properly with TeraDesk, and makes
it possible to open network targets from the Open... menu/dialog if
appropriate applications are installed.

As a byproduct of these changes, names of network objects can also be
assigned as targets of symbolic links and desktop icons. It is thus
possible e.g. to have icons of favourite internet sites on the desktop.

A considerable number of not-very-obvious bugs has been fixed as well, most
of them related to handling of extremely long paths and filenames
(unfortunately, the bugfix code increased program size by about 1 KB). See
the history file for details.

Another point which may be of interest is that there may be, probably very
soon, Russian, German and French translations of this version of TeraDesk.
Links will be posted on TeraDesk home page as soon as translations become
available.

Users are advised to read the documentation before running the program ;)
Some features of TeraDesk may not be immediately obvious.

Have fun.

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                         PEOPLE ARE TALKING
                        compiled by Joe Mirando
                          joe@atarinews.org

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. Last week brought us a couple of feet of
snow here in my area, and to make it even more interesting, it all hit
in under 24 hours! Yep, that's right, I got a whopping 27 inches of snow
in my backyard from 9:00 pm on Saturday to about 3:00 Sunday afternoon.
For a while, we were averaging four inches an hour. My back is still
yelling at me after all the shoveling!

The Olympics is in full swing, and I've got to admit that I'm having a
little trouble in coming to terms with some of the sporting events. I
mean, c'mon... snowboarding? An Olympic event? Gimme a break. It may be
fun... it may require skill (no 'maybe' about that)... but I just can't
see it being on the same level as the old tried-and-true events. What's
next? Olympic hula-hoop? The Wheel-O Relay?

Anyway, The Olympics are in progress in Italy (or, as my grandfather used
to say, "It-lee"). I find it a good sign that we citizens of the world
are still able to put politics and our philosophies aside for a couple
of weeks and join in sportsman-like competition. I guess that now the
tricky part would be to carry that over to other areas.

The NewsGroup activity is low again this week, so it's going to be a
short column. I'm afraid that this is going to become an ongoing trend.
Let's hope that I'm wrong. Hell, it HAS happened once or twice before.
<chuckle>

Let's get to the news, hints, tips and info from the UseNet

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Ronald Hall asks for opinions on games:

"Hey guys, I was just poking around Wikipedia and noticed the entry for
Dungeon Master. It says it had 50% penetration of the ST market. Does
that make it the best selling/most popular ST game ever? I was just
curious as to what game holds that spot."

'RustyNutt' tells Ronald:

"Zork Zork Zork!"

Edward Baiz adds his opinion:

"Dungeon Master on the ST was a great experience and I just loved it. To
me, however, the Ultima series was the best."

Ronald tells Edward:

"I loved that series too Edward. I played 3-4-5 to death. I've got 6 but
never completed it. VI even runs on my Falcon, and is hard drive
installable. I have to say I'm disappointed in the graphics in certain
areas of the game though. It looks like whoever ported it over used the
original EGA (not VGA) versions for things like character portraits. Very
ugly. Far less than what even a standard ST is capable of doing.

I guess 5 is my favorite. There is just something about the story of the Underworld and the Shadow Lords that holds my attention. Other little things as well, like when you do something wrong and the next town you go into has a wanted poster listing you and your party in it. Alas, mine won't run on my Falcon, just on my STs..."

'Phantomm' posts this about MagiC4 and Ease:

"I need to know what the final version of Magic4 and Ease was? And if there are updates that still can be gotten for free or pay?

I have at least version 4 of both. Also, can Ease be used with Geneva instead of NeoDesk?

And how does Ease stack up to other desktop replacements such as NeoDesk, and Thing?"

Edward Baiz tells Phantomm:

"I have version 5 of Ease and version 6.2 of Magic..."

Chris Ryan asks:

"Before I ask questions that have probably been asked a hundred times, I was wondering if there was a good web site that had good resources for the 1040st? I've been doing google searches, but I cant seem to find a definitive one."

Ronald Hall tells Chris:

"Here ya go:

http://web.archive.org/web/20041014070904/www.megacom.net/~q-funk/ST/
http://www.atariarchives.org/cfn/06/02.php
http://jens-inge.dyndns.org/html/guide206/INDEX.HTM
http://www.dwade.freeserve.co.uk/atari/main.html

I also have an Atari FAQ section on my BBS (see sig below), although it is not complete. Its a bit more bother to reach, since as a new user you would have to go through the registration. Honestly, you can probably get most of what you need from the links I provided. Unless you just want to call for a chance at the free monthly prizes. :-)

Other than that, don't hesitate to ask questions here in this newsgroup. For every wretch that slams you for asking a question they have happened to have heard before, there will be 3-5 that try hard to help you. :-) "

While we're talking about desktops and such, Djordje Vukovic posts this about TeraDesk:

"Version 3.80 of Tera Desktop (TeraDesk) open-source desktop is available at: http://solair.eunet.yu/~vdjole/teradesk.htm

TeraDesk is currently the only open-source desktop available for 16-bit and 32-bit Atari computers. Developer's goal is to maintain TeraDesk as

a small, simple, fast and reliable desktop, which can run on any TOS-compatible Atari computer, clone or emulator and which can be be functional and competitive in the modern multitasking environments and all flavours and versions of TOS-compatible operating system(s), while keeping, as much as reasonable, familiarity with the original TOS desktop.

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A considerable number of not-very-obvious bugs has been fixed as well, most of them related to handling of extremely long paths and filenames (unfortunately, the bugfix code increased program size by about 1 KB). See the history file for details.

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Users are advised to read the documentation before running the program. Some features of TeraDesk may not be immediately obvious...

Accidentally, wrong files were put on the web page. Corrected files were uploaded again about 00:20 h, Feb. 16th (GMT+1). If anyone happened to download the wrong file(s) in the few hours between the initial upload and the upload of the corrected files, please download again.

Sorry for the inconvenience.

A correction had to be made to the just-released TeraDesk 3.80- a variable was used uninitialized, which could cause starting of an application to -sometimes- fail with "Command too long" message. As luck would have it, this bug showed up for the first time only after the program has been released, although that particular piece of code has been made about a month ago.

As this was just a single correction and made immediately after the initial release, I did not update the version number; it is still 3.80, but release date is now February 16th.

Hopefully it will be all right now. I apologize for the inconveniences that this repeated releasing might have caused."

Dr. Uwe Seimet, author of HD Driver, posts this tidbit:

"s the Atari Workshop website has vanished and I have not been able to reach Atari Workshop by email I have decided to offer the English

version of HDDRIVER *including the English manual* myself.
I am currently revising and updating the English manual. Users ordering
HDDRIVER 8.1 can now choose between the German, English and French
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Remember that you can pay with PayPal, which ensures that HDDRIVER can
also be ordered conveniently from countries outside the EU without
having to pay high fees for bank transfers or sending the money in
cash."

Rodolphe Czuba tells Uwe:

"That's a good decision!! The internet is here to allow direct selling
from small authors/companies...this business model does not need some
distributors..."

Well folks, that's it for this time around. Tune in again next week, same
time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying
when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Call of Duty 2: Big Red One!
   """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""   Nintendo DS Internet Browsers!
                                     Video Games Awards Show!
                                     And more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
   """"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

                    Call of Duty 2: Big Red One

World War II was one of the biggest conflicts in American history. The
impact of this war has been so strong that to this day, game makers are
still bringing out title upon title about it. With all of the games based
on World War II, it takes a lot to keep the genre fresh and convince gamers
to play another first-person shooter taking place in the 1940s.

The new angle that Treyarc Games took is to retell the story of the Big Red

One, the legendary first infantry division. These guys were the best of the best, and they were in the thick of the conflicts from Europe to North Africa. You play a newcomer to the squad. You'll start right off on the battlefield, and you'll get a tutorial as you finish your first mission. Each mission is a large level broken down into objectives and checkpoints. There are only about one to three checkpoints per level, so whenever you do die, you'll be sent back to the very first objective before you reached a checkpoint. This can be infuriating, because at times your enemies will mow you down with gunfire and explosives from all possible sides.

To survive the levels, you get to use many types of weapons, some American and others that drop when you kill enemy soldiers. Each weapon has its own firepower, reload time, basically its own style: picking up a sniper rifle might be a better choice than an M1 for one level, while having two automatic weapons may be best for a more intense mission. Since this game has a degree of realism to it, you can only carry two guns at a time and you can only carry a certain amount of ammunition at a time. Reloading is realistic as well, so if you find yourself standing in the middle of the street with enemies nearby, it would be smart to find cover before you reload a clip.

The graphics for 'Big Red One' aren't quite amazing. They're your standard, non-eye-catching graphics, but they look good enough when you're blasting swarms of Nazi troops or planting dynamite on a 'Screaming Mimi.' The aspects of the game that are really done well are the movements of the non-playable characters, and the faces of the main characters look as if they were based on actual people. Each level layout also looks as if they have been properly modeled after the true battlegrounds they represent.

'Big Red One' has bonus materials, such as artwork, behind-the-scenes footage, and the history of the real Big Red One, so you can learn the basics of who these game characters are based on and what made them so notable. There's also some incredible video footage from the real battle that you can see in the game and the extras menu. You get more extras in the Special Edition of the game, but the regular game's bonuses are just as rewarding. Multiplayer is fantastic and playing against human opponents in classic modes like capture the flag and deathmatch makes 'Big Red One' worth sticking with after you've finished playing offline.

'Call Of Duty 2: Big Red One' has about as many hours of gameplay as a first person shooter should, and the action is hectic, fast, and exciting. People who've invested their time into many titles like this will not feel like their time playing has been wasted. For everyone else, you won't regret traveling back to one of the most famous wars in American history, especially if your PS2 is rigged for online play.

Ratings (1-10):

Graphics 7.5. Good in some aspects, average in others.

Sound 8.0. Actors from the HBO miniseries Band of Brothers lend their voices to the Big Red One squad. All the sounds of war are authentic and the ambience is believable.

Gameplay 8.5. The game is very challenging and mission objectives have a good amount of variation

Story 8.0. You go from ground to air to sky with the whole Big Red One squad, and after each mission that's completed, you get to see real footage from WWII.

Replayability 8.5. Story mode is worth playing more than once, and online multiplayer is a great mode.

Overall 8.0. 'Call of Duty 2: Big Red One' holds its own with the flood of World War II shooters in the market.

Nintendo Device to Have Internet Browsers

Opera Software AS will supply Internet browsers for Nintendo Co.'s hugely popular dual-screen handheld game device, the Norwegian company's chief executive said Wednesday.

"This is a breakthrough," Opera co-founder and chief executive Jon S. von Tetzchner told The Associated Press by telephone. "This is the first time we have provided a browser for a game device."

As of early this year, the Japanese company had sold more than 13 million of its Nintendo DS devices, which it began manufacturing in November 2004.

Nintendo DS combines dual screens, touch screen, voice recognition and wireless communications capabilities.

Von Tetzchner said users will now also be able to surf the Internet with both of the device's screens by using the Opera browser inserted on a card into their machine's wi-fi slot.

"There had been no really good browser earlier in the game machine market," von Tetzchner said by telephone from a trade fair in Barcelona, Spain.

Opera said the system allows owners to use their game machine with the key functions of a personal data assistant, or PDA.

"Within just five seconds of turning on the system, the Nintendo DS is already fully operational. This makes it the ideal device to enable people to swiftly obtain the latest information from the Internet, wherever they are," said Masaru Shimomura, deputy general manager of Nintendo's research and development department.

He praised the small Norwegian company's browser for ease of use and quick access to favorite Web sites.

According to Opera, the browser will first be offered to consumers in Japan, with further distribution to be decided later. The companies declined to estimate the economic value of the deal, which is based on a license payment per unit.

"Gaming devices are growing more advanced and a great Web experience is becoming a product differentiator for gaming manufacturers. Opera is excited to work with Nintendo to deliver a unique dual screen, full Internet experience on Nintendo DS," said Opera Executive Vice President Scott Hedrick.

Oslo-based Opera's browser has won praise as being fast and compact, and has been gaining ground in mobile phones and personal digital assistants.

The company, which employs about 250 people, was founded in 1995 by two

former developers for the Norwegian telecommunications group Telenor as an offshoot of a company project.

Playstation 3 Release 'Definitely This Year'

Sony will definitely launch its new PlayStation 3 (PS3) game console this year, though the company still has not decided on a launch date nor pricing for the console, said Tetsuhiko Yasuda, managing director of Sony Computer Entertainment Asia.

While stressing that the earlier launch of Microsoft's Xbox 360 did not add pressure on Sony, Yasuda told reporters that the company wants to be completely prepared when it begins marketing the PS3.

Accumulated global shipments for the PS3 are expected to exceed 100 million units, a record that was set by Sony's earlier games consoles, the PS and PS2, despite the fact that the PS3 will be priced higher than the PS2, Yasuda said.

To the disappointment of attendees at the show, Sony only displayed three mock-up versions of the PS3 and demonstrated some functions of the new console through a video. This raised doubts if Sony can really bring the PS3 to the market in the spring of this year as expected, according to market sources.

The PS3 will lag the Xbox 360 more in market share if Sony delays launch of the PS3 to the end of 2006, the sources said, noting that Microsoft predicted global shipments of its Xbox 360 will reach 4.5-5.5 million units by the end of June.

Yasuda also told reporters that Sony is expected to follow its previous experience in the production of the PS and PS2 by outsourcing production of the PS3 to contract makers a few months after its launch, according to a February report in the Chinese-language Commercial Times.

Taiwan makers are expected to benefit from Sony's outsourcing policy and win orders for the PS3 in 2007 since local makers have been producing the PS2 and PSP (PlayStation Portable) for the Japanese vendor, the paper said.

Video Game Awards Show To Debut in 2007

The Academy of Interactive Arts and Science has unveiled a new annual television event, a co-venture with Dick Clark Prods. designed to showcase the year's best video games and the creative teams that made them possible.

The announcement came last week during the nonprofit organization's DICE 2006 Summit in Las Vegas.

"The Academy of Interactive Arts and Sciences Presents: The Year in Games" is set to debut in first-quarter 2007.

Jules Haimovitz, vice chairman and managing partner of Dick Clark Prods., said the audience for the show is "much, much broader than most people think, at least 12-49."

He was reluctant to describe the show in detail, however, because the
format is unique. "We're creating a form of video that heretofore hasn't
existed, so it would be like trying to describe a music video to somebody
in 1968," Haimovitz said. "It will be entertaining even to those outside
the game crowd."

AIAS president Joseph Olin agreed the special will be much more than an
awards show. Although its selection of games will be based on those titles
making the shortlist for the DICE Awards - which honor achievement in many
aspects of game creation - the show will focus more on how these titles
became worthy of recognition.

Part of the program's approach will be to incorporate insights from
celebrities, consumers and well-known talents in the video game industry.

"Since its inception 10 years ago, the AIAS has honored the innovators of
the industry," Olin said. "The time is right for us to introduce these
pioneers to the mass market, and we're looking forward to making our dream
a reality in tandem with Dick Clark Prods. through a major television
special."

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                    A-ONE's Headline News
                 The Latest in Computer Technology News
                      Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

                 Apple to Begin Shipping New MacBook Pro

Apple Computer Inc. said Tuesday it will begin shipping this week the new
MacBook Pro, the company's first laptop computer to feature an Intel Corp.
microprocessor.

Apple, which is in the midst of a historic shift to Intel chips, last month
introduced its first Intel-based desktop computer, the iMac G5, about six
months ahead of schedule.

Analysts expect the new Intel-based Macintosh products to boost Apple's
perennially small share in the U.S. PC market, which increased slightly
last year to more than 4 percent as the popularity of Apple's iPod media
players drove consumers to give the Macs another look.

Using Intel's Core Duo processors aligns Apple with the same kind of chips
that rival makers of Windows-based computers use. It also has allowed Apple
to tap into the vast marketing power of Intel, the world's largest
semiconductor company.

Apple says the MacBook Pro delivers up to four times the performance of its
former flagship laptop, the PowerBook G4, which uses PowerPC chips from IBM
Corp. and Freescale Semiconductor Inc.

Instead of using the previously announced 1.83 gigahertz Core Duo

processor, Apple said the new high-end MacBook will feature a 2.0 Ghz chip, but will remain priced at $2,499. The lower-end $1,999 model will have a 1.83 Ghz chip, instead of the previously announced 1.67 Ghz chip.

Customers may also upgrade to a 2.16 Ghz version.

Some may have to wait before obtaining one. Apple has said it may need some time to catch up with a backlog of orders.

Microsoft Sees Vista in Stores by Holidays

Microsoft Corp. hopes to have the new version of its Windows operating system available in time for the U.S. holiday season, narrowing the time frame for the much-anticipated product's release.

Microsoft has long said the new system, called Vista, would be available in the second half of 2006, but spokesman Lou Gellos said Tuesday that the company wants to have it in stores in time for the holiday season, which typically begins around Thanksgiving. He declined to give any more detailed guidance.

Analyst Charles Di Bona with Bernstein & Co. said that's important in part because consumers, rather than businesses, are often the first to buy a new version of Windows. He also said it will signal that Microsoft, which has often been plagued by missed deadlines, can get this product to market in time.

"If they do that, they're on schedule, so that's good," he said.

Joe Wilcox with Jupiter Research said the move also will be good for computer makers, who can use Vista as a push to persuade shoppers to buy new PCs.

"The Dells and the HPs of the world want to have those nice, shiny new PCs to sell, and a brand new operating system would be a good start," he said.

The new version of Windows, Microsoft's first update for its flagship offering in five years, promises to give users faster, better ways to search for data such as e-mails, music, photos and video content. It also will offer security improvements, an updated look and other perks such as parental controls and a new media player.

However, it won't include an even more advanced way to store and organize information, called WinFS, that was originally promised and is now slated to come later.

The release comes as the Redmond software giant faces emerging competitors such as Google Inc., whose products threaten Microsoft both on and off the desktop.

Microsoft must persuade consumers that the upgrade will be worth the expense and trouble, when plenty of users might be perfectly happy with a computer running the current version of Windows.

"The challenge for Microsoft will be trying to show consumers why Windows XP is not good enough and why they should consider Vista, and that's as much a marketing challenge as it is one about features," Wilcox said.

No Name Change for MSN

Though the new head of Microsoft's MSN division has been calling the company's MSN portal "MSN Media Network" internally, Microsoft has no formal plans to rebrand the site, a Microsoft spokesperson says.

Rumors and published reports surfaced earlier this week that Microsoft would change the official name of its MSN portal to reflect a ramp up of services on the site offering more access to digital media and entertainment content. However, Microsoft spokesperson Kathy Gill says that while there will be an enhancement of entertainment and media services under the leadership of new MSN division leader John Nicol, the MSN brand will not change.

"There will be investments going forward so it feels like a media network, but it will still be MSN," she says.

Nicol took over as general manager of MSN in November following the departure of Hadi Partovi, who previously led the division. Nicol formerly was president and chief executive officer of the news channel MSNBC, and also worked for Microsoft's IPTV division at the company's Silicon Valley campus before assuming his current role, Gill says.

Nicol will use his media experience to enhance MSN so it seems more like an Internet destination for entertainment services rather than merely a place for users to link to and find information or check e-mail, she says. The company will integrate more video content through MSN's various channels – such as Travel, Shopping, Health & Fitness, Dating & Personals, and Movies – as well as add personalization features so users can customize the way they use those channels, Gill says.

For instance, if an MSN user has photos from a recent trip he or she would like to share with the MSN community, there will be a service that allows them to post those photos to the Travel channel, she says. Similar customization features will be offered for other channels, Gill adds.

Microsoft's MSN is at the center of the company's strategy to offer more Web-based services and entertainment content so the company can derive revenue through paid advertising and deals with media content providers. Microsoft officially launched this initiative, dubbed "Live Software," late last year.

Since then the company has rolled out new services, such as Windows Live, a beta service that lets users customize Web-based content and services on a homepage called Live.com. The company also is expected to roll out the first beta of Office Live, an online e-mail and business intelligence service aimed at business users, next week.

Also to bolster its Live Software plans, Microsoft recently launched Live Labs, an internal research effort to help get Web-based services developed and out of the door quickly, and is slated to host its first-ever trade show for Web and multimedia content developers, MIX 06, in Las Vegas next month.

U.S. Moves to Fight Internet Censorship

The State Department announced plans Tuesday to step up a campaign to combat efforts by foreign governments to restrict use of the Internet.

At a news conference, Josette Shiner, a top State Department trade expert, called the Internet "the greatest purveyor of news and information in history" but said too often the flow is blocked by government censors.

Shiner announced the formation of a task force that will consider, among other issues, the foreign policy aspects of Internet freedom, including the use of technology to restrict access to political content.

She said it is a top U.S. government priority "to do all we can to ensure maximum access to information over the Internet."

The United States, she said, has "very serious concerns" about the protection of privacy and data throughout the Internet globally, and in particular, some of the recent cases raised in China.

Under Secretary of State Paula Dobriansky said a U.S. team was en route to China on Monday to discuss the issue with Chinese authorities.

Separately, Graham characterized China's use of U.S. Internet companies to abuse its citizens' rights "chilling and outrageous." He mentioned Yahoo! Inc., which has been accused of helping Chinese police identify and convict a journalist who criticized human rights abuses in China.

U.S. lawmakers have criticized China's use of U.S. Internet companies to abuse its citizens' rights. Yahoo! Inc. has been accused of helping Chinese police identify and convict a journalist who criticized human rights abuses in China.

Virus Attacking Apple Macintosh PCs Found

A malicious computer worm has been found that targets Apple Computer Inc.'s Mac OS X operating system, believed to be the first such virus aimed specifically at the Mac platform.

The worm is called OSX/Leap-A, according to a posting on the Web site of antivirus software company Sophos, which said the worm is spread via instant messaging programs.

The worm attempts to spread via Apple's iChat instant messaging program, which is compatible with America Online's popular AIM instant messaging program, according to the Sophos Web site.

The worm sends itself to available contacts on the infected users' buddy list in a file called "latestpics.tgz," according to the Sophos Web site.

The vast majority of malicious hacks are aimed at Microsoft Corp.'s Windows operating system and some of its products, largely because Microsoft has more than 90 percent of the market for computer operating systems.

"This first Macintosh OS X threat is an example of the continuing spread of

malicious code on to other platforms," said Vincent Weafer, senior director at Symantec Security Response, in a statement.

The worm will not automatically infect Mac computers, but will ask users to accept the file, Weafer said.

Symantec ranked the new worm as a Level 1 threat (with 5 being the most severe).

Cyberstalking Law Opens Debate On What's Annoying

It didn't get much publicity, but an anti-stalking bill passed by Congress recently makes it a federal crime to "annoy" someone over the Internet.

And that's really beginning to bug some people.

"It's a stupid law that has slipped in under the radar," says Clinton Fein, a San Francisco-based artist who runs annoy.com, a website that he says offers "unique and irreverent" commentary on politics and culture. "Who says what's officially annoying? Is that a business we really want our government to be in?"

The law makes it a crime to anonymously "annoy, abuse, threaten or harass" another person over the Internet.

Rep. Jim McDermott of Washington inserted the provision into legislation that reauthorized the federal Violence Against Women Act. It carries a prison sentence of up to two years and an unspecified fine for those convicted of violations. President Bush signed the bill into law Jan. 5.

McDermott said he was prompted to act by the case of Joelle Ligon, a Seattle woman who was sent menacing e-mails, falsely accused of resume-padding in messages to co-workers and impersonated in sex-oriented Internet chat rooms from 1998 to 2003.

Some of the communications were traced to a former boyfriend in South Carolina. He was sentenced to five years of probation and 500 hours of community service after he was prosecuted under a federal telecommunications law that protects against harassment.

To eliminate questions over whether phone law applied to the Internet, McDermott pressed for the new legislation. The language "annoy, abuse, threaten or harass" was taken directly from the telephone law.

Mike DeCesare, a spokesman for McDermott, says the new law is not intended to curb free speech.

"This is about bad people doing bad things. ... It relates to somebody who does something to somebody else," he says. "It's not about posting something on a message board. It's got to be direct, one-to-one communication."

No one has been prosecuted under the new law, DeCesare says.

Critics aren't satisfied. Fein says it is unclear whether the law refers to annoying "conduct" or simply an e-mail whose message irritates its recipient.

"No one knows what this means," Fein says. "That in itself has a chilling effect."

Barry Steinhardt, a lawyer who specializes in privacy issues at the American Civil Liberties Union in New York City, says the new law's chief problem is the "subjective nature" of the word annoy. "Words like threaten, harass and abuse can be defined by what a reasonable person understands them to mean," he says. "Anyone who's ever had their spam filter stop something they wanted, or let something through that they didn't, knows that deciding what is annoying is something else again."

He says the ACLU is considering whether to ask a federal court to declare the new law unconstitutional because it's too vague.

A scholar who specializes in cyber law says the law could be difficult to overturn. Susan Brenner, a University of Dayton law professor and a consultant to the Secret Service on cyber laws, says courts likely would read "annoy" together with the words that follow it - "abuse, threaten or harass" - and conclude that the law refers to specific behavior.

In 2004, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit used that reasoning to uphold the conviction of Erik Bowker, an Ohio man who had stalked a Youngstown television reporter via telephone.

But in 1999, a federal appeals court in Washington, D.C., ruled that a man could not be prosecuted for "annoying" conduct because he had telephoned the U.S. attorney seven times to complain about a case that had been brought against him. The calls, the court found, were political speech protected by the First Amendment.

David Hudson, a lawyer with the First Amendment Center, a speech-rights advocacy group in Nashville, says the different ways that courts have interpreted the word "annoy" make the new anti-stalking law "ripe for a challenge."

Internet Users Go Online for Fun

Some people go online just for the sake of it: A new study finds that on any given day, nearly a third of U.S. Internet users log on just for fun or to pass the time.

Compared with other online tasks, recreational surfing ranks behind only e-mail and search and it's about even with getting news online, according to the Pew Internet and American Life Project.

"What it says about the Internet is that it is becoming a full-blown destination in itself," said Deb Fallows, the Pew senior research fellow who led the study released Wednesday. "They are just led there just to see what is going on."

Pew credits the growth in broadband connections at home and the increase in the number and variety of Web sites available.

The 30 percent of Internet users who went online for fun on a given day represents an increase from 21 percent a year earlier.

Skeptics may see parallels with television channel-surfing, an activity often dismissed as mindless.

But Fallows said the Internet is different: "It's not a passive activity that you're just sucking yourself into. You are navigating yourself around, you are discovering things, learning things."

The random telephone-based survey of 1,931 adult Internet users in the United States was conducted Nov. 29 to Dec. 31 and has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

Bill Graham's Rock Archives Stream Online

Some of rock's most intriguing content is now in cyberspace via Wolfgang's Vault. The memorabilia seller offers treasures from the stash of promoter Bill Graham, programmer of San Francisco's legendary Fillmore, who died in 1991.

A 75-song playlist culled from 7,000 to 8,000 vintage audio and video concert recordings made between 1966 and 1999 began streaming on the Wolfgang's Vault Web site February 8, at no cost to consumers. The owner of the Graham archive is optimistic that some of the seminal performances will make it to retailers' shelves as CDs and DVDs by year's end.

San Francisco-based Wolfgang's Vault sells authentic Graham concert memorabilia from such acts as Johnny Cash, Miles Davis, Santana, Jefferson Airplane, the Rolling Stones, U2, Tom Petty, Jimi Hendrix and the Who.

Entrepreneur Bill Sagan paid more than $5 million for the cache in 2003. He named it in honor of Graham, who was born Wolfgang Grajonca in Germany.

Six years after Graham died in a helicopter crash, SFX purchased Bill Graham Presents for $65 million. Clear Channel acquired SFX in 2000, creating Clear Channel Entertainment, which sold the Graham material to Sagan. He considered the archive an entry into the world of music intellectual property.

"I knew generally what was in (the archive), though there were close to a thousand boxes that we didn't open during due diligence," Sagan says. "I spent very little time listening to the audio archive or looking at the video archive, so a lot of surprises happened after we completed the transaction."

The video footage, much of it expertly shot with multiple cameras, includes the legendary 1973 San Francisco show by the Who at the Cow Palace when Keith Moon fell into his drum kit; the Sex Pistols' final concert; and a four-camera shoot from the Tanglewood (Mass.) concerts of 1970.

"The quality is unbelievable," Sagan says. "I give the BGP people a lot of credit; they kept (the tapes) cold and they kept (them) at low humidity."

Gregg Perloff, a former exec at BGP hired by Graham in 1977, says that, contrary to some recent press reports, most BGP employees were knowledgeable about the archive. "All of this stuff had been archived and inventoried," says Perloff, now president of Another Planet Entertainment. "We were well aware of what we had."

The four asset groups, as described by Sagan, included posters, handbills, tickets and the copyrights associated with them; photos from virtually every performance from Graham's 30,000 shows; the audio/video masters; and miscellaneous items from Graham's life and career.

Wolfgang's Vault has been selling the memorabilia since 2004. Sagan says he is "damn close" to making back his initial investment - and that is before making a dime from what may prove to be the archive's most valuable asset, the music.

Sagan and his team spent more than a year transferring the recordings to high-end digital format, then mastering virtually every song. Sagan says they have mastered about 80 percent of what they intend to use.

There is no cost to stream the music at 128k at the Wolfgang's Vault site. Sagan says he hopes the feature will draw more fans to the site and sell more merchandise.

Meanwhile, Sagan is navigating the murky publishing and licensing waters, hopeful that CDs and DVDs of Graham's shows could be on the market by the end of the year. Sagan says he is in talks with record labels.

"The chances of having physical audio product by mid-summer are very high," Sagan says, adding that DVDs could be available by the fall.

"I had imagined it would be a quagmire, and now I don't think it will be," Sagan says of obtaining the rights to release this content, which was recorded legally. "Graham, especially with some of those early performance contracts, got some rights that other (promoters) might not have. He was a visionary in how he structured some of these agreements."

For his part, Perloff is happy that some of these concerts will see the light of day. "It's fantastic what they're doing, in the sense that (the music) will get out into the marketplace and people will get a piece of that period," Perloff says. "People are going to go nuts over this stuff."

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